

Gentlemen Let's Face It, We Have Met "The Man" and He is Us.

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"

2 Samuel 12:7

Dr Chuck McGowen

DAVID THE MAN

The occasion of the above statement recorded in the book of 2nd Samuel, involved Israel's King David being courageously confronted by his friend and prophet of Israel, Nathan. The brave declaration was prompted by David's blatantly sinful act of adultery with Bathsheba followed by an attempt to cover up their crime by sending her husband Uriah to his death; as he fought on the front lines to defend his country in the service of his king. The death of Uriah was patently a case of pre-mediated murder just as certain as if David had inflicted the fatal wounds himself.

Nathan had offered the following parable to David to prove a point. *"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."* The allegorical "poor man" represented Uriah and the "rich man" was obviously David, the enormously wealthy king of Israel. The female (ewe) lamb represented Uriah's only wife Bathsheba, abruptly taken from him by David, a man who had many wives.

The Scripture tells us that after hearing the parable which he thought had really occurred, *David burned with anger against **the man** and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, **the man** who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."* (2 Samuel 12:1-7) It was after David had uttered his inflammatory statement of anger and had pronounced the alleged perpetrator's death sentence that Nathan looked squarely into David's eyes, pointed his accusing finger at the king and shouted out those now famous words, **You are the man!**

I don't know about you, but when I read of the various accounts of Biblical hero's failings I have tended to become hyper critical and almost sanctimonious regarding the many ways in which they had failed to please God, all resulting from their actions. Beginning with David and his sins, we need to look very carefully into our own hearts, remember our own particular failings and take a bit of spiritual inventory on ourselves. Let's take the sin of adultery. While you may be saying, "Not me, I have never done what David did. I have been utterly faithful to my wife." Before becoming so

overly confident in our faithfulness we need to remember what Jesus had to say about that particular sin in His renowned Sermon on the Mount. Commenting of the 7th Commandment He offered this caveat: *You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'* *But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* (Matthew 5:27-28) That sheds a whole different light on the entire subject, doesn't it?

Next, let's have another look at David's sin of murder. When folks are citing their own perceived justification as to why God should allow them to go to heaven when they die, one of the numerous reasons they give has to do with the fact that they have never committed murder. But in that same Sermon of the Mount Jesus had this to say to those of us who would readily acquit ourselves of that charge: *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'* *But I tell you that anyone who is **angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, Raca, is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell* (Matthew 5:21-23)

None of us can ever claim to have avoided anger when it comes to our relationships with family or friends. The word Raca, in Aramaic (a Hebrew dialect) means "empty head." We don't use the term Raca but we might say that so and so is a numb skull, a dummy or somewhat stupid, but whatever term we use Jesus said that it is just as bad as murder. Consider how often you and I have been angry with a particular person or called someone a fool. Now how does that make us feel condemning David's murderous act? The tongue is a very capricious organ. The Lord's foster brother James, writing in his epistle on good works that prove the genuine nature of our faith, echoed the same sentiments as Jesus had proclaimed with the following words: *If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.* (James 1:26). James went on to say: *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.* (James 3:9-10)

ADAM THE MAN

Going back to the very beginning of time we take note of Adam and his failure as the spiritual head of his house; and that at a time when there was only one household consisting of a mere two people who were instructed by God Himself to keep but one commandment; that leadership role should have been relatively easy. The apostle Paul clearly teaches us, and no doubt God had directly instructed Adam, the truth that *the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.* (1 Corinthians 11:3) Though there has always been a tendency to blame Eve for the Fall of mankind, it is patently obvious that Adam failed seven specific times in that role of "spiritual head" and a new look at that weakness is warranted here.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Genesis 3:1-6)

We are surely guilty of at least one of Adam's seven failed opportunities to act out his role as the spiritual head of the house. First, Adam knew full well that snakes did not talk; after all he had named all of the animals on Earth. *Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. (Genesis 2:19-20)* Thus when Adam heard that reptile speak he should have immediately taken Eve by the hand and simply walked away because something just wasn't right in Eden. Next, when Adam heard that malicious viper question God's spoken Word, he should have stepped in and said, "Look here you fiendish creature, I got the truth directly from God and He said nothing of the sort." The third opportunity for spiritual headship came when Eve misquoted the Word of God. He had never said that they could not touch the fruit: The clearly explained prohibition merely involved eating it. As spiritual heads of our homes we should each take on the role of a teacher and inform our wife and children about the truths that God has revealed to us in the Bible. On a fourth occasion Adam should have defended the Word of God, when Satan, appearing as a slithering, sneaky snake, contradicted God's warning that a breach of the singular law would result in death. Adam should have responded, "You bet we'll die if we eat the fruit. I got that solemn admonition directly from the mouth of God Himself." But he didn't make the correction, which would have been mostly for the benefit of his wife; he simply allowed the Devil's contradiction to stand. As Christian men we should know God's Word so well that we can realize when a counterfeit statement, offered as a biblical truth, is being made.

When FBI agents attend training in Quantico Virginia, they spend 95% of their time in the counterfeit section of their investigative education studying genuine money. They thus come to know what authentic money looks like so well that any one of the myriad variations from the bona fide currency can be quickly identified. That ability of recognizing error is also true if one intensely studies the Holy Bible. On the fifth occasion that would have prevented the Fall of mankind, Adam

missed the opportunity to chastise the demonic snake for questioning God's integrity; the viper had done so by saying that God was somehow afraid that the human couple would become like Him knowing good and evil. Adam could have pointed out that an infinite God has absolutely nothing to fear from finite creatures: They can neither be like Him totally nor comprehend Him fully. When Adam saw the lust in Eve's eyes he missed his sixth opportunity to utilize his divinely ordained authority and put an end to the couple's impending spiritual fall from grace. He could have said, "Eve, whatever you are thinking at this very moment, do not eat that fruit or you will surely die." The seventh failed opportunity to perform his duty came when Eve handed Adam the fruit. He should have said, "I am sorry my dear, your choice, your freedom of will allowed you to eat the fruit and die but mine is to refrain from the temptation to eat it and live eternally." The rest is history.

Think now of the times that you and I may have failed as the spiritual heads of our household. God has placed within our hands the moral authority to lead and guide by example and the clear instruction regarding His will by means of biblical revelation. Too few of us know God's Word well enough to teach it to our family. We are told that; all *Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Just look at the ways God has provided for us to teach, rebuke, correct and train our children in the ways of Christ. God's following admonition to the Israelite nation applies to us as well. *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* (Deuteronomy 6:5-9) The impressive conversations with members of our family and the symbolism displayed by our religious jewelry should be accompanied by Spirit directed substance in our daily lives. Our walk should be patterned after our talk. Bumper stickers and crosses made into jewelry are of no value unless they are accompanied by a strong sense of integrity and a visible display of the fruit of the Holy Spirit which is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-23) Adams failures have been duplicated over and over again in each of our households.

ABRAHAM THE MAN

Next in line for our unjustified criticism is Abraham, a man chosen out of paganism by God to sire the nation of Israel and to assume the role of spiritual father to spiritual Israel (that includes each one of us). *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (Galatians 3:29)

We tend to blame him for the perpetual battle between the Arabs and the Jews because both Jews and Muslims point to Abraham as their earthly father. Recall that Abraham's wife had grown markedly impatient when their marriage had remained barren well into their old age. God had previously promised that Abraham's off-spring would be as numerous as the sands of the sea and the stars in the universe. But Sarah considered that God had no intention of keeping that promise and as a result of her lack of faith in God's spoken Word she convinced her husband to bed and impregnate her maid Hagar. God's promises are always kept, but according to His sovereign plan not ours. His timing is always perfect, but we are impatient creatures. This was God's solemn pledge to Abraham: *God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and **will surely give you a son by her**. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."* (Genesis 17:15-16) But as time grew long, the barren couple grew old and Sarah's patience grew thin. *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.* (Genesis 16:1-4) Had Abraham fully trusted the in the spoken words that God had promised him on previous occasions, he would have rejected his wife's offer to sire a son through Hagar. God had clearly told Abraham, *I will make you into a great nation* (Genesis 12:2) and later we read, *Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.* (Genesis 15:13)

Now think back guys, has there ever been a time when your wife convinced you to act when it did not appear to be consistent with God's timing or according to His sovereign and perfect will? Maybe we should have responded like Job, who is still known for his consummate patience. The conversation between Job and his wife went as follows: *Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.* (Job 2:8-10) Job had a much better knowledge of God and His faithfulness without having the advantage of biblical revelation than some of us do with a completed Scripture plus numerous commentaries and teachers. God uses bad times to enable us to grow, teach us lessons we need to learn and sometimes to punish us for our errant ways. Job apparently knew something about God that many

of us have yet to learn. Solomon said this about that. *When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.* (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

ISAAC THE MAN

Isaac also failed in his divine appointment as the spiritual head of his house. The Scriptures tell us that his wife Rebecca had little respect for his wishes, the Middle Eastern tradition of the times or God's sovereign plan. *Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger."* (Romans 9:10-12) Tradition in the East and Middle East required an adherence to the rule that the eldest son would be the heir. God had apparently told Rebecca that His sovereign plan would demand the opposite. However, instead of allowing God to work in His own way and in His own time, she intervened and manipulated the situation. Isaac had the following conversation with his favorite son Esau: *When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."* (Genesis 27:1-4)

Now Rebecca was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebecca said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: (Genesis 27:5-8) Rebecca's eaves dropping on a private conversation was a sign of utter disrespect. Her plan was to fool her husband into thinking that Jacob, her favorite son, was Esau. Isaac was nearly blind and about to die. She wanted him to confer the ownership of their property to Jacob instead of Esau, opposing her husband's will and the dictates of tradition. She was a manipulative woman who was trying to do God's work for Him. There was absolutely no reason to doubt God. He is perpetually in total control and works things out to suit His plan. We should all remember that, *it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (Philippians 2:13) No one knew that better than Isaac because he had been taught to trust God consistently, confidently and constantly by his father Abraham.

The following passages teach us about God's way of seeing to it that His will gets accomplished. *Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him* (Psalm 115:3); *The LORD*

works out everything for his own ends— even the wicked for a day of disaster (Proverbs 16:4); Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21); He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. (Ephesians 1:11) To run ahead of God and manipulate the situation according to our own plan and purpose shows an arrogant lack of trust in the work and will of almighty God.

PETER THE MAN

One of my favorite biblical personalities is the apostle Peter. His many failings during his days as a personal friend and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ epitomize ours as well. He too was married, contrary to the tradition of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church that consider him their first Pope. Peter was introduced to Christ by his brother Andrew and soon left everything, a home with family and his fishing trade, to follow Christ. How many of us would dare do that? Yet we criticize Peter for his impetuosity, his spiritual pride, his apathy, his reluctance to be identified as a believer and his eventual denial of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may recall the events, but allow me to refresh your memory in case you have forgotten them. My colleague in medicine and brother in Christ, doctor Luke relates the cascade of events that caused Peter to fall as follows: First he tells us about Peter's impetuous nature and spiritual pride; Jesus looks at Peter and says, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*" But he replied, "*Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.*" Jesus answered, "*I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.*" (Luke 22:31-34) Imagine the utter nerve of Peter in contradicting the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, sometimes our lives are a blatant contradiction of the name we bear, Christian. On occasions it appears that we have broken the essence of the 4th Commandment which says, *You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.* (Exodus 20:7)

It certainly takes a great deal of spiritual pride to say that you will never fall and that Satan can never have any influence on your life. Next we note that Peter was guilty spiritual apathy, a sort of falling asleep on the job of doing the will of God. *Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed.... When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."*

(Luke 22:39-41; 45-46) Peter was among that group. He had just said that he would never let Jesus down and yet he could not even stay awake and pray for Him, knowing that very soon the Lord was going to be put to death. We too are apathetic when we neglect a personal time of prayer and the study of God's Word.

Having been too proud of his position in Christ's inner circle, overly confident of his own fidelity and then having become apathetic, it was only natural that he would gradually drift back and remain a follower, but at a safe distance. *Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.* (Luke 22:54) Any time we fear the company of the enemies of Christ to the extent that we are afraid to identify ourselves as His followers, we make the exact error that Peter made that night; we follow at a safe distance. Finally, having been impetuous and prideful, apathetic and reluctant, it was only a matter of time before Peter would make the final move and deny his Lord and Savior. *But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.* (Luke 22:55-62) That episode of denial could well occur in your life or mine if we let the first step take hold of our thinking; if we become puffed up and proud of our selves. When that happens and we become complacent concerning our quit time with the Lord, it will only be a matter of time before we gradually slip away and deny Him. The apostle Paul offers the following caveat, realizing that spiritual pride is the first step taken in a believers back sliding: *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.* (Romans 12:3)

BARABBAS THE MAN

When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" (John 19:5) He was pointing to "the man" they had sent to him for crimes he did not commit. The man was Jesus and He was not only 100% man He was also 100% God; a fact they either could not understand or would flatly deny. *Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called*

Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:15-23)

In the Aramaic dialect of the time, the name Barabbas was a compound word that meant son of (BAR) a father (ABBA). Noting that interesting combination of two Aramaic words we can readily see that, in a generic sense, Barabbas represents us all; we are all sons of fathers. It was no accident that among the hundreds of possible criminals that could have been released that day, Barabbas was the one chosen to fulfill the plan of God; the one who represents us all. Speaking to a large crowd on the Day of Pentecost Peter reminded the Jews of what they had recently done; *Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (Acts 2:22-23)* This was part and parcel of the perfect plan of God that would be used to teach us the lesson that Christ was substituted for every son of a father that would one day come to trust in and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives. We are each a Barabbas, a son of a father, and Jesus was sacrificed in our stead in accordance with *God's set purpose and foreknowledge.*

Thus, the words of Nathan to David, "You are the man," can easily apply to us in more than one or two contexts and they are certainly applicable when it relates to the substitutionary death of Christ on the Cross of Calvary in the place of Barabbas. You may not be able to admit to the failings of David, Adam, Abraham, Isaac or Peter (yet I can personally identify with each one of them), but we can certainly see that when it comes to identifying with any of those of whom I have written, we must accept that in the person and life of Barabbas, we sinners saved by the grace of God and we are unquestionably "the Man."

Soli Deo Gloria

